

Accidental shutdown of main engines

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A member has reported an incident in which a vessel's main engines were inadvertently shut down.

What happened?

During transit, the vessel was rolling considerably and as a result the door of a nearby cabinet swung loose. A member of the marine crew moved to close the door; as he did so the vessel rolled and he was accidentally pressed against the emergency shutdown buttons. The two central buttons controlling the fuel pumps were accidentally activated (see photographs below), causing loss of power to both fuel pumps. The vessel was without main engines for 35 minutes. The generators were unaffected and a thruster was started to provide headway.

It was discovered that the Perspex cover in place to prevent accidental activation was so flexible that it bent in sufficiently to press against and thus activate the emergency stop buttons when the crew member accidentally pressed against it.



The following lessons were learnt:

- It should not be possible to accidentally activate critical items such as emergency shut down controls.
- Protective covers and other barriers to prevent accidental activation must be fit for purpose.
- At least two separate actions should be required to activate the shut down.
- Emergency controls should be located in such a way as to be quickly accessible when required but so that accidental activation is not possible.

The following actions were taken:

The following action was implemented immediately to prevent recurrence of this potentially very serious incident:

- The Perspex guard was temporarily strengthened and steps were put in place to fabricate and install a permanent guard at the next port call.

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